

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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P R 220818Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9240

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

DIA

CINCPAC

USSAG,NKP

13TH ADVON UDORN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 19821

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, TH

SUBJECT: NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTION RESULTS

REFS: (A) BANGKOK 19395; (B) FBIS BANGKOK D161414Z DEC 73;
(C) FBIS BANGKOK D180402Z DEC 73; (D) FBIS BANGKOK D210233Z
DEC 73; (E) BANGKOK A-382

SUMMARY: CREATIVELY INTERPRETING THE 1972 INTERIM CONSTITU-
TION, THE KING DISSOLVED THE OLD NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE
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ASSEMBLY (NLA). HE THEN GAVE AN OPENING ADDRESS TO THE

NATIONAL CONVENTION WHICH HE HAD PREVIOUSLY SELECTED AND CHARGED WITH CHOOSING THE NEW NLA MEMBERSHIP (REF A). BLOC LOBBYING LEAVENED THE DELEGATES' EVENINGS AND THEY VOTED FOR ESSENTIALLY PREDICTABLE CATEGORIES OF PEOPLE AND REPUTATIONS. THE RESULTS REFLECTED THE SHIFT TOWARD CIVILIAN TECHNOCRATS, INTELLECTUALS AND ADMINISTRATORS. VOTING AS DISCIPLINED BLOCS THE ARMY AND POLICE SELECTED THEIR SENIOR LEADERS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE KING DISSOLVED THE THANOM APPOINTED NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (NLA) WITH A QUICK CONSTITUTIONAL SLIGHT OF HAND (REF B). HE BASED HIS MOVE ON ARTICLE 16 OF THE 1972 CONSTITUTION WHICH STATES THAT THE MONARCH "HAS THE PREROGATIVE TO ISSUE A ROYAL DECREE WHICH IS NOT CONTRARY TO THE LAW." THIS MOVE STARTS THE NEW NLA AFRESH AND AVOIDS LEGAL COMPLICATIONS SUCH AS EXILED COLONEL NARONG KITTICHAKORN'S FAILURE TO RESIGN.

2. THE KING OPENED THE CONVENTION DECEMBER 18 WITH A NATIONALLY TELEVISED SPEECH WHICH CALLED ON THE DELEGATES TO RETURN A NLA REPRESENTING A BROAD SPECTRUM OF INTERESTS AND OPINIONS (REF C).

3. LOBBYING BEGAN FROM THE TIME THE DELEGATES ARRIVED IN BANGKOK. ACCORDING TO THE THAI LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER "PRACHATHIPATAI'S" ANALYSIS TAMBON AND VILLAGE LEADERS WERE THE LARGEST GROUP IN THE CONVENTION WITH 651 MEMBERS. OTHER MAJOR GROUPS INCLUDED MILITARY OFFICER, 341; CIVILIAN OFFICIALS, 319; TEACHERS, 273; BUSINESSMEN, 259; LAWYERS, 143; FARMERS, 111; SKILLED WORKERS, 102; JOURNALISTS, 83; AND MEDICAL DOCTORS, 65.

4. THE RESULTS (REFS D AND E) SUGGEST THAT THE MILITARY AND CIVIL SERVANT BLOC WERE BETTER DISCIPLINED THAN OTHERS. THE LARGE GROUP OF VILLAGE AND TAMBON LEADERS ONLY ELECTED ELEVEN REPRESENTATIVES DUE TO SPLITS IN THEIR RANKS AND THEIR PROPENSITY TO VOTE FOR THEIR CIVIL SERVICE SUPERIORS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF LOCAL ADMINISTRATION (DOLA); OTHER GROUPS APPARENTLY SUFFERED FROM THE SAME FAULT SINCE THE 299TH MAN ON THE LIST RECEIVED 159 VOTES OF THE 2,000

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PLUS POSSIBLE VOTES. ALTHOUGH THEY CONSTITUTED ONLY 13 PERCENT OF THE CONVENTION, THE DOLA REPRESENTATIVES RETURNED 23 PERCENT OF THE NOMINATIONS TO THE NLA, BEGINNING WITH THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF DOLA. THE ARMED FORCES ONLY ELECTED 23 REPRESENTATIVES BUT THE VOTE SPREAD SUGGESTED THAT THE MILITARY BLOC VOTED WITH DELIBERATE INTENT. THE ARMY OBVIOUSLY VOTED BY SENIORITY, RETURNING RANKING OFFICERS AND PICKING TROOP COMMANDERS OVER STAFF OFFICERS.

5. THE TOP POLICE LEADERSHIP WAS ALSO ELECTED BEGINNING WITH A DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL, TWO ASSISTANT DIRECTOR-GENERALS, THE COMMANDER OF THE BANGKOK METROPOLITAN POLICE, AND NINE OTHER KEY OFFICERS.

6. THE NATIONAL CONVENTION'S TOP TEN SELECTIONS READS LIKE THE RESULTS OF A NAME RECOGNITION TEST. THE MOST VOTES WERE CASE FOR JOURNALIST GADFLY-PUBLISHER OF THE PRESTITIOUS "SIAM RATH", KUKIT PRAMOTE. HIS EDITOR NOPPORN BUNYARIK WAS NUMBER SEVEN. DR. PUEY UNGPHAKORN, LEADING CONTENDER FOR FUTURE PRIME MINISTER RANKED SECOND, IN FRONT OF THE DEAN OF THE CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY POLITICAL SCIENCE FACULTY, DR. KASEM SUWANNAKUL. THE NATION'S RAINMAKER, M.R. DHEBHARIK DEVAKUL WAS FIVE, BEHIND THE MAGSAYSAY AWARD WINNING RURAL DOCTOR, KNASAE CHANAWONGSE. THE GENERAL MANAGER OF THE ELECTRICITY GENERATING AUTHORITY OF THAILAND, THE COMMANDER OF THE PALACE GUARDS, THE COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE SECOND ARMY, AND THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF DOLA WERE AMONG THE TOP TEN.

7. CONTROVERSY ALREADY SURROUNDS THE SITTING OF THE NEW NLA. ARTICLE 6 OF THE 1972 CONSTITUTION REQUIRES THAT THE ASSEMBLYMEN BE AT LEAST 35 YEARS OF AGE AND A THAI CITIZEN BY BIRTH. FOUR NOMINEES, FROM THE VERY INTELLECTURAL GROUP WHICH CREATED THIS DEMOCRATIC OPPORTUNITY, ARE UNDER AGE - DR. PONGPEN SUTUNTAPHAI AND DR. CHAI-ANAND SAMUTTHAWANICH, MEMBERS OF CONSTITUTIONAL APDRAFTING COMMITTEE; KHANCHAI BOONPON, COLUMNIST FOR "THAI RATH" NEWSPAPER; AND SUTHICHA YOUN, MANAGING EDITOR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE "NATION" NEWSPAPER AND COLUMNIST TO PRESTIGIOUS "SIAM RATH." IF THESE MEN ARE TO SIT, THE CONSTITUTION HAS TO BE REMODED. ONE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR NOMINEE SUGGESTED TO US THAT THE KING MAY TEMPORARILY REPLACE THESE

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FOUR, HAVE THE NLA AMEND THE CONSTITUTION, AND THEN RETURN THE DROPPED NOMINEES. IT IS NOT CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT THE NLA MAY AMEND THE CONSTITUTION.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 19821

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

8. COMMENT:ELECTION TO THE NLA HAS BROUGHT NEW AND YOUNGER PEOPLE INTO THE POLITICAL SYSTEM. THE MEDIUM AGE HAS SHIFTED FROM MID-50S TO MID-40S. ONCE HAVING HAD A TASTE OF POLITICS THESE PEOPLE MAY BE THE SOURCE OF NEW CANDIDATES IN THE UP-COMING ELECTIONS. CERTAINLY THE PRESTIGE OF ROYAL SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT TO THE NLA WILL BE A CAMPAIGN ASSET. IN ONE STROKE THE KING'S MOVE CREATED A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE SUFFICIENT PRESTIGE TO COMPETE WITH THE PREVIOUS POLITICIANS.

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9. THE NEW NLA WILL BE THE FOCUS OF CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL MOMENTUM IN THE NEAR FUTURE WHICH COULD UPSTAGE OTHER ACTORS. THIS IS PARTLY DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE LONG OUTSPOKEN DISSENTERS IT CONTAINS, ARE NOW LEGITIMIZED. FURTHERMORE, THE ASSEMBLY CONTAINS A PREDOMINANCE OF DOLA CIVIL SERVANTS. DOLA, ALTHOUGH IT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DAILY ADMINISTRATION

OF THE GOVERNMENT, HAS NOT NECESSARILY BEEN ON THE INSIDE OF
POLITICAL RESOURCE ALLOCATION DECISIONS IN THAILAND. THE
LARGE DOLA BLOC CAN BE EXPECTED TO USE ITS NEW ACCESS TO
POWER TO BETTER DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST THE MILITARY OR THE
POLICE.

10. ISSUES THAT WILL BE RAISED IN THE NEW NLA INCLUDE A
MOVE TO RELEASE THE THREE FORMER MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
THE THANOM GOVERNMENT IMPRISONED FOR TREASON, A SCRUTINI-
ZATION OF THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT'S DECREES AND LAWS WITH THE
SPECIFIC INTENT OF ABOLISHING MARTIAL LAW.
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